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UNCLAS SAN JOSE 000304

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SLOW VOTE COUNT DELAYS ELECTION RESULTS

REF: SAN JOSE 283

1. Less than 24 hours after polls closed, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) stopped posting updates to its webpage with results from 88.4 percent of voting stations already reported. At that point the leading candidates were virtually tied with 3,250 votes separating them out of the 1.4 million cast. The TSE has since launched a special hand count of the remaining 11.6 percent of the ballots but in the past two days has missed two self-imposed deadlines for reporting the remaining results.

2. The special count is being observed by representatives from the various parties who reported that 92 percent of the vote had been counted as of mid-day February 8. According to these reports, Arias's lead has expanded slightly to around 3,800 votes, but the reports conflict as to the precise number. The TSE announced that it would post updated results on its webpage at 8:00 pm.

3. TSE Chief Magistrate Oscar Fonseca refused to speculate when the TSE would finish its count of the remaining ballots. After missing his two previous deadlines, Fonseca acknowledged that this election was unlike previous years and that counting was taking much longer than usual because every vote is being carefully scrutinized by the political parties. A mandatory manual recount of all the votes has also begun. Official results will not be available until the manual recount is finished. In previous years, this recount has taken two weeks to complete.

4. Despite the delays and occasional lack of transparency on the part of the TSE, the process has been orderly and the public is patiently awaiting results. Both the leading parties have been circumspect in their statements regarding the election results, although Arias continues to express certainty that he has won while Solis has asked the TSE not to release any more results until the final manual recount is finished. There have been no allegations of fraud to date.  
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